



United Nations
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International
Criminal Tribunal
for the former
Yugoslavia

Tribunal Pénal
International pour
l'ex-Yougoslavie

STATEMENT

(Exclusively for the use of the media. Not an official document)

PRESIDENT

The Hague, 21 December 2017

Remarks by Judge Carmel Agius, President of the ICTY ICTY Closing Ceremony

Your Majesty, King Willem-Alexander, United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, Excellencies, distinguished guests, victims' representatives, staff members, friends of the ICTY, and all of those watching today's Closing Ceremony as it is transmitted live.

Sometimes, in the course of history, decisive action by the international community sparks movements for change. The ICTY stands out as a shining example. Its creation was a resounding expression of the common resolve to fight against impunity, and for humanity.

Certainly, we were created as an ad hoc Tribunal: non-permanent, with jurisdiction over those most responsible for committing atrocities in the former Yugoslavia, and a mandate to bring justice, peace and security to one particular region of the world. However, despite our limited *raison d'être*, the achievements of the past 24 years show us something different, they point to: 'the universality of our Tribunal.'

Against all odds and in defiance of expectations, the ICTY evolved into a body that enunciated universal standards, distilled internationally accepted norms, developed best practice after best practice, and demonstrated that impunity can be overcome. More importantly, it became an inspiration throughout the world, and indeed the movement that was initiated a quarter of a century ago has transformed into an expectation that war criminals can, must, and will, be brought to justice.

Since then, accountability for atrocities has crystallised into a universal value, which will continue to shape the fight for justice in the future. Just think about how far we have already come since 1993. The ICTY ushered in a new era - indeed, a new paradigm - in international criminal justice, and its legacy will outlast every single one of us here today.

The ICTY has not been alone in this success. Many partners and donors are here today, others were unfortunately not able to join us, but are of course no less appreciated. On behalf of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, all of its Principals, Judges, and staff members, past and present, I wish to convey my warmest and deepest gratitude to all those who have brought us to this moment in history, as we commemorate the closing and legacy of the ICTY.

In particular, I express the Tribunal's sincere thanks to the outstanding hospitality of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, including this magnificent City of The Hague. You have extended every generosity, from the day you first welcomed us into our premises, through to hosting our final Ceremony here in this immensely significant and historic building, the Ridderzaal. We are proud that, due in part to the ICTY's experience, The Hague is now renowned as the final destination of international justice, the place that symbolises the ultimate wish of victims everywhere to see justice done.

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It must be acknowledged that the successes of the ICTY are the successes of the United Nations as a whole. We are honoured to have the United Nations Secretary-General join us in recognition of the ICTY's accomplishments, and as we close the Tribunal, we can feel secure in the knowledge that he will continue to lead the United Nations towards a more perfect realisation of the ideals for which we all stand. I am equally comforted that we conclude with a capable successor body in place, namely the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

Today, 21 December, marks the winter solstice, which throughout the ages has served as an occasion to gather together and mark the closing of an old chapter, while preparing for the new. This afternoon, the sun will slowly set as our Closing Ceremony comes to an end. On 31 December 2017, it will set on the ICTY for the final time. Today may be the shortest day of the year, but it will remain one of the most memorable, as we take the opportunity to reflect, stand united, and look to the future. My own wish is that the spirit of goodwill that was embodied by the community of nations back in 1993, when the Tribunal was established, will be rekindled and will endure long after its closure.

I thank you all once more for your attendance and your support.
